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REVIEWS AND NOTES

MATTHEW ARNOLD: HOW TO KNOW HIM. By Stuart P. Sherman. Indianapolis. The Bobbs-Merrill Company. 1917. 8vo, pp. [xl], 326. Portrait. Price, \$1.50, net.

ALFRED TENNYSON: HOW TO KNOW HIM. By Raymond Macdonald Alden. Indianapolis. The Bobbs-Merrill Company. 1917. 8vo, pp. [xvi], 376. Portrait. Price, \$1.50, net.

It is no easy task to write an introduction to the works of Matthew Arnold. He was a poet, a critic of literature, politics, and society, an expert in elementary education, something of a theologian, and a Biblical expounder. Thus the background of one who qualifies as a critical interpreter of his thought must be many-sided indeed.

Professor Sherman has written what we must on the whole regard as a good book. In many respects it assuredly measures up to a high standard of excellence. The author is not prevented by any lack of sympathy or understanding from intelligently approaching his subject; the arrangement of his material is good; and the proportions of his book are justifiable. On the critical side we shall later point out what seem to us one or two defects.¹

About one-fourth of the book is given to Arnold's poetry. More than any other poet of his time does Arnold reflect the temper of the day—the "main movement of mind . . . democratic, scientific, critical, realistic—directed, in short, toward the extension of the sway of reason over all things." Tennyson is further removed from the arena of the intellectual struggle; Browning reflects very little of it. But from Arnold's verse at least something of the main tendency of it could be reconstructed. The limitations of the time appear, perhaps, in the comparison of the two sonnets, "In Harmony with Nature: to a Preacher" and "Quiet Work," in which two apparently incompatible aspects of Nature are presented. With Tennyson, Arnold saw the "cruel" aspect of Nature (cf. "In Memoriam" lvi. 4, "The Passing of Arthur" 13-15); but he could not or did not reconcile this aspect with that of the quiet, orderly process of Nature, ever working toward something different and

¹ A few misprints have been noted. Page 143, l. 14, read "Hamelin." P. 197, l. 12, read "Licensed." P. 226, l. 6 f.b., read, presumably, "mediate." P. 255, l. 2, read "Pharisaical." P. 326, l. 1, read "Mrs. Humphry Ward."

generally better. The transitional character of his age is well brought out in the "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," in which he speaks of his soul as wandering, like that of an old Greek in a Northern land,

between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born.

At a later time of his life he passed into the newer world of a larger, saner, truer religious outlook; but his days of verse-writing were then over, and this change finds no reflection in any poetry from his pen.

If the age and the absorbing demands of Arnold's vocation prevented him from achieving the highest rank as a poet, the limitations of his native poetic powers are also evident. He was not a constructive poet. He could not write drama at all. He attempted no epic further than a retelling of the mere episode of Sohrab, which owes much of its beauty to its Homeric echoes, and the Balder, which Professor Sherman and others rightly condemn. Even the lyric he scarcely attempted on any large scale, perhaps aware of his lack of ability, perhaps warned by the example of Wordsworth's dreary pages which as editor he excluded from his volume of well-chosen selections from the poetry of the sage of Rydal. And even within his chosen field of the shorter lyric he sometimes exhibits a poor ear; e.g.,

The hands propping the sunk head
("The New Sirens"),
As if the sky was impious not to fall
("Empedocles"),
Who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind?
("To a Friend"),
And yet, I swear, it angers me to see
How this fool passion gulls men potently
("Tristram and Iseult" iii).

Still, these are after all slight blemishes on a considerable body of good work—poetry which places Arnold easily in the class just below Tennyson and Browning and among the chief minor poets of the Victorian era.

But precious as is Arnold's poetry, it was obviously well that he turned from verse to criticism, literary and social. For the work of revealing England's shortcomings much needed to be done; and never was a man better qualified for the task. By temperament and by training Arnold was fitted for this work. He never lost his temper, and in his attacks on the beast of Philistine narrowness and ugliness he scored many hits. Of course it took time to make a lasting impression. He was cordially disliked by many of his contemporaries as a superficial dilettante. But gradually he came to be understood

and heeded; and in recent years his influence has somewhat increased.

Here may be taken up one or two minor points. It has been alleged, and with justice, that Arnold misrepresented the Hebrews and the Greeks when he spoke of the Hebrews as all for conduct and the Greeks as all for beauty.² It will not do to judge the Hebrew by the utterances of the prophets, any more than one would judge of the conduct of average America by the condemnatory remarks of Mr. Sunday. Likewise the Greeks are not necessarily to be adjudged as irreligious and as universally given to a worship of estheticism. If we were able to compare the rank and file of the Greeks with the rank and file of the Israelites, it may be doubted if we should find one people widely differing in moral principles from the other. For both, religion consisted primarily and chiefly in keeping Jahve or the gods appeased and good-natured. Neither connected religion with moral conduct in our sense of the term. It may be questioned whether in the fifth century B.C., say, the average Hebrew was much more moral than the average Greek—due allowance being made, of course, for the different standards and types of morality developed by the two peoples. If the prophets of Israel describe and plead for a high ideal of moral conduct, "no modern theology has taught higher and purer moral notions than those of Æschylus and his school, developed afterwards by Socrates and Plato, but first attained by the genius of Æschylus. Thus he censures high-handedness even in the gods (*Prometheus*), so laying the foundation for that great doctrine of immutable morality which is the basis of modern ethics. Again, he shows the indelible nature of sin, and how it recoils upon the third and fourth generation, thus anticipating one of the most marked features in Christian theology. Nay, even involuntary transgressions of the moral law are followed by dire consequences."³ The truth, is as Mr. Robertson has shown beyond the shadow of a doubt,⁴ that Arnold set up an imaginary Hebrew state which had no foundation in fact.

Again it is hard for an American to understand how Arnold, having espoused the theological position which he took, could remain in the Anglican Church. Even as a young man, as his poetry shows, he broke definitely and finally with the tradition-

² John M. Robertson develops this point at some length in his "Modern Humanists"; and the same conclusion was arrived at independently by Miss Lois E. Montgomery, a Cornell graduate student who is writing a paper on "Matthew Arnold and Religion."

³ John P. Mahaffy, "Social Life in Greece from Homer to Menander," 4th ed., London, 1879, p. 154.

⁴ "Modern Humanists," p. 152.

al orthodox theology of the time, as did his friend Clough. Yet Clough found that he could not honestly remain an Anglican; whereas we find no hint that Arnold ever contemplated leaving the church of his fathers.

The explanation would seem to lie in three facts. First, Arnold was intensely attached to the Established Church, whose position as the *Via Media* never troubled him as it did Newman, and he clung to the belief that it could in some way be made the basis of a new and real church of all England, in which many phases of belief should be represented, and which should be a real society for the cultivation of goodness. Second, he had an utterly exaggerated notion of the benefits of an established church. It was highly desirable, for example, he thought, in America. It never occurred to him that there might be some benefit accruing from the free discussion of moot questions of religion and ecclesiastical polity among different denominations, or that the Dissenters had ever had any excuse for a separate existence. He serenely assumed that whatever treatment the Dissenters had received from the Establishment they doubtless deserved. And this leads us to the point, that Arnold never really understood the Dissenters, and especially that one of the Dissenting bodies to which his religious views in general would have brought him—the Unitarians. His ignorance of the Unitarian position, as shown in the passage in chapter x of "Literature and Dogma," is ludicrous. "The Unitarians are very loud," he says, "about the unreasonableness and unscripturalness of the common doctrine of the Atonement. But in the Socinian Catechism it stands written: 'It is necessary for salvation to know that God *is*; and to know that God *is*, is to be firmly persuaded that there exists in reality some One, who has supreme dominion over all things.' Presently afterwards it stands written, that among the testimonies to Christ are 'miracles very great and immense,' *miracula admodum magna et immensa*.'" He thus implies that the Unitarians accept the miracles, which he has rejected; yet the Unitarians had long before outgrown this belief.

It is probably due in large measure to Arnold's fearless if often illogical criticism of the Bible that the Anglican Church to-day contains so large a wing of liberal thinkers. For Arnold was a powerful leader of liberal thought within the Establishment.

And this brings us to another question—the adequacy of Arnold's basis of knowledge. Professor Sherman himself concedes (p. 313) that for his discussions of the date and authorship of various books of the Scriptures Arnold was "inadequately equipped"; and another recent writer⁵ has gone so far as to

⁵ *School and Society*, July 27, 1918, viii. 93.

call him a Sophist, on the ground that he taught without a sufficient basis of knowledge. In this charge it must be admitted that there is some justice. Perhaps the full implication that he was slipshod and careless about his knowledge and was bent rather on attaining certain personal ends than on making the truth prevail, can hardly be sustained. We may readily concede to him absolute honesty and sincerity. But the fact remains that he recklessly attacked the Pentateuchal discussions of Bishop Colenso, a man vastly better qualified than he to discuss the historical and antiquarian features of the Bible; and it is a safe guess that in writing about St. Paul he knew little more about the subject than any average well-read man. What he liked counted with him for a great deal. He was a poor logician, but he never seems to have learned of it. His argument for the Establishment tells heavily in favor of Rome; but the fact did not disturb him in the least. He demanded science from the men of science and religion from the men of religion; it never seems to have occurred to him to ask where he, neither a scientist nor a priest, came in, serenely branding all inconvenient passages in the Bible as "human perversions." There is in his books much that is true; but coming from Arnold, of whom we might have expected so much, these volumes are strangely unreliable.

His poetry and some of his critical essays on books and authors will live long; for the ordinary world the rest of his work is as dead as a medieval romance.

This, finally, raises a question about Professor Sherman's book. What is the function of such a work? Is it to be wholly uncritical and merely interpretative, or is it to inform us of how the world has judged the works in question? If it ought to be the latter, then the present book, in spite of its lucid summaries and its highly intelligent exposition, must be pronounced not quite satisfactory.⁶

Professor Alden has had an easier task than Professor Sherman had, since Tennyson was never anything but a poet. Alden's work is both expository and critical.⁷ He has succeeded, we think, in producing a guide to the study and appreciation of

⁶ Even with Professor Sherman's exposition one may sometimes venture to differ. He says, for example: "The 'divinity' of Christ is not in the least proved by prophecy or miracle; it is proved by the *experience* of those who have followed him and have done his will" (p. 300). Mr. Robertson came nearer the truth, we think, when he remarked ("Modern Humanists," p. 151): "The father [Thomas Arnold] believed in a personal God, in a personal Devil, in the divinity of Jesus, in miracles, and in a resurrection; the son believed in none of these things."

⁷ The following typographical and other errors have been noted: Page 4, line 6, for "a hundred pounds" read "twenty pounds"; the author has confused pounds and dollars. P. 4, l. 9 f.b., after "different," the word "from" must be

Tennyson which will not quickly be superseded. He considers the poet with reference to his native endowment and his environment both of time and of place. He maintains his critical poise throughout. We shall not venture to differ from him on the major points he lays down, but shall comment on two or three minor matters.

Of Tennyson's character the author says: "His only fault, one might say, was a rather exaggerated desire to be let alone; or, to put it negatively, an unwillingness to mingle, except through his writings, with the stream of contemporary life." Without desiring to call undue attention to Tennyson's faults, one may perhaps be permitted to view his extreme sensitiveness to criticism as a minor fault; possibly, also, he exaggerated the importance of the poet's contribution to the discussion of life.

He saw thro' life and death, thro' good and ill,
He saw thro' his own soul.
The marvel of the everlasting will,
An open scroll,
Before him lay.

All this is a comfortable doctrine for the poets themselves; and would it were true! But as a matter of fact, how many poets are there to whom we turn for guidance in matters of life and death and the soul? Probably there are some poets whom we ought to study more than we do; but it is for the beauty of their work rather than because of any divinely inspired message they have for us.

Still it was well that Tennyson had a lofty conception of the worth of poetry. No man ever more consistently cultivated the Muse throughout so long a lifetime. There have been more voluminous poets, perhaps; but scarcely one has left so large a body of highly excellent work. Tennyson's predecessor in the laureateship naturally recurs to our minds. It is customary to rank Wordsworth as the greatest British poet of the nineteenth century, and we shall not presume to insist that this opinion is wrong. Still, something might be said by a champion of the claims of Tennyson. As a philosopher he probably did not contribute as much to the world's thought as did Wordsworth; but as an artist in metre, he was, we think, far more accomplished and resourceful. If he perpetrated some inanities like "O Darling Room!" "The Skipping Rope," "The Ring-

inserted for good grammar. P. 9, l. 4 f.b., for "harm" read "arm"; in the next line, "his" should be italicized. P. 40, l. 9, the meaning is not clear: does Alden mean "an element which any who would know him must understand"? P. 102, l. 1 f.b., for "Their" read "The." P. 157, ll. 12, 18, 26, p. 184, l. 14, p. 374, l. 12 f.b., read "Ettarre." P. 210, l. 13, read "snoring." P. 299, l. 4, these are not three consecutive years, as Alden is well aware (cf. p. 320, l. 12); the statement, therefore, needs to be explained or modified.

let," the sonnet of 1832, "There are three things which fill my heart with sighs," and some passages like this,

My very heart faints and my whole soul grieves
At the moist rich smell of the rotting leaves,
("Song"),

still, on the whole he was a better critic of his work than was Wordsworth, as the considerable body of his discarded poems will testify; and of this the generally happy alterations in numerous lines of his retained poems furnish almost as good evidence. While he was a less subtle thinker than Browning, he was a far greater artist.

Concerning the allegorical features of the "Idylls" Alden has some sensible remarks. The interpretations of extremists like Condé B. Pallen⁸ show what can be done in reading hidden allegorical meanings into these poems. If Tennyson had in mind all the ideas Pallen credits him with, he must have been as subtle as a Schoolman. Still, the Idylls are undoubtedly far too allegorical to be successful in these times. The hopelessness of the effort is most evident in the case of King Arthur himself. As a character in the story the King is a stupendous failure. He is supposed, according to Tennyson's own designation, to represent the soul at war with sense, and ultimately obliged to yield. But he has no war with anybody; his conflicts with the heathen kings have already taken place and are not a part of the Idylls. He is blameless throughout. Alden tries to make him culpable, since after the vampire Vivien has corrupted the court, "even the king can not be called blameless now, since he apparently winks at the foulness by which he is surrounded." But this view is untenable, since Arthur's *only* fault is his faultlessness—

High, self-contained, and passionless,
("Guinevere" 403).

What Alden has to say about the pessimism of the Idylls deserves to be heartily endorsed. The Idylls furnish one more illustration of the great law that we

rise on stepping-stones
Of [our] dead selves to higher things;

that we "fall to rise." And this is directly implied in the last line,

And the new sun rose, bringing the new year.

The next effort will carry the race on a little farther in its mighty effort, a little nearer the goal—or would do this were it not for the fact that the next effort is toward a higher goal, as our successive ideals rise higher and higher.

⁸ "The Meaning of the Idylls of the King," New York, The American Book Company, 1904.

The book concludes with some illuminating and generally true remarks about the Victorian age. An age is known by what it produces. The Victorian age produced the most fruitful scientific thinking since Copernicus. Beginning with 1832, it took larger strides in political and social reform than any other age since 1642. It went farther in theological reconstruction than any other since Luther. Any poet who faithfully chronicles the spiritual feelings of such an age, in a form supremely beautiful in itself, will scarcely lack readers so long as mankind is interested in the history of its development. We shall recur again and again to Tennyson, the poetic interpreter of a great age.

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MOTIVES IN ENGLISH FICTION. By Robert Naylor Whiteford, Ph.D. New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1918. \$2.00.

A work which shall be at once a chronological history of English fiction from Malory to Dickens, and an analysis of "the motives that color the threads in the warp and woof of all our fiction," is what Mr. Whiteford proposes in his preface. As he has been impressed, he tells us, during a protracted reading of English fiction "by the wonderful variations of that originality that reveals itself as the unity of life," the whole force of his "exposition of the advance of the English novel has been thrown on the motives manifesting themselves in variations that lie back of all life." These prefatory statements are quoted, since otherwise by some readers the author's intention may be but vaguely discerned in the chapters that ensue.

In ten chapters English writers of fiction—not everyone, perhaps, will be willing to class as *novelists* Thomas Malory and Miss Mitford—are discussed in a chronological order which groups in Chapter V, among others such a motley company as Samuel Johnson, Henry Brooke, and Horace Walpole; in Chapter VI, Frances Burney, Robert Bage, Thomas Day, and Ann Radcliffe; while it forces into Chapter VII their respective coworkers and counterparts of a little later date: Maria Edgeworth, William Godwin, Mrs. Inchbald, and "Monk" Lewis. This adherence to chronology so strict as to obviate any logical grouping of novelists and their works is a fundamental weakness in the organization of the book.

The treatment of each novelist consists of a summary of the stories of some or all of his works, sometimes full, as in the case of the *Morte Darthur*, Congreve's *Incognita*, and Mrs. Charlotte Smith's *Old Manor House*; and at other times very brief, as in